

Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 TEL AV 10386 141751Z
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W
-----089705 141754Z /53

O 141709Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4881
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL JERUSALEM IMMEDIATE
USMISSION USUN IMMEDIATE
USMISSION SINAI
DIA WASHDC IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T TEL AVIV 10386

EXDIS - MILITARY ADDEE HANDLE AS SPECAT EXCLUSIVE

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MARR, MILI, EG, IS
SUBJECT: SITIATION IN NABATIYAH AND UNIFIL AREAS

REF: USDAO DAMASCUS IR 6 892 0175 78

1. DAO CODED SOURCE TEL AVIV 6 849 0047 PROVIDED FOLLOWING
INFORMATION TO ARMA ON 14 AUGUST: (USUSLLY RELIABLE
TRAINED PROFESSIONAL OBSERVER. INFORMATION PROVIDED PROBABLY
RELIABLE, BUT SOURCE'S TENDENCY TO DISPLAY FAVORABLE
ATTITUDE TOWARDS PLO - "NICE GUYS" - SHOULD BE CONSIDERED
WHEN EVALUATING INFORMATION).

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A. SOURCE WAS IN THE BEAUFORT CASTLE AREA FROM 4
TO 13 AUGUST AND TRAVELLED THROUGH NABATIYAH ON 13 AUGUST.
DURING THIS PERIOD HE HAD LONG DISCUSSIONS WITH PLO OFFICERS
AT BEAUFORT CONCERNING THEIR ATTITUDES ABOUT THE
MOVEMENT OF LEBANESE ARMY ELEMENTS TO THE SOUTH. HE IS
CONVICNED THAT THE PLO SEE SUCH A MOVE AS BEING IN THEIR
BEST INTERESTS AND THAT THE PLO WOULD NOT OPPOSE ANY MOVE

THROUGH NABATIYAH TO THE AKIA BRIDGE. PLO OFFICERS ARE DISPLAYING SATISFACTION OVER THE CURRENT CONFRONTATION SITUATION AT KAWKABA BETWEEN THE LEBANESE BATTALION AND THE CHRISTIANS UNDER HADDAD. THEY APPARENTLY BELIEVE THAT A LEBANESE PRESENCE SOUTH OF THE LITANI IN THE CENTRAL AREA WOULD CONTINUE TO BE OPPOSED BY CHRISTIANS IN BUFFER AREAS AND COULD EVENTUALLY RESULT IN GREATER FREEDOM OF ACTION FOR PLO ELEMENTS.

B. SOURCE IS OF THE OPINION THAT THE PLO CONTROLS THE ROUTE NORTH FROM NABATIYAH TO THE SYRIAN POSITIONS AND THAT THERE ARE FEW IF ANY REJECTIONISTS IN THE AREA. HE ALSO OBSERVED TWO SAIQA SOLDIERS AT A ROADBLOCK SOUTH OF NABATIYAH WHICH LENDS HIM TO BELIEVE THAT A SMALL SAIQA ELEMENT IS IN THAT AREA.

C. THERE ARE ABOUT 20 PLO AT BEAUFORT EQUIPPED WITH ONE 32MM MORTAR, ONE PROBABLE 120MM MORTAR AND ONE ARTILLERY PIECE, PLUS TWO 50 CAL AND ONE 12.7 MACHINE GUNS. THE PLO DID NOT FIRE THEIR WEAPONS AT CHRISTIAN OR LEBANESE FORCES DURING THE PERIOD 4 - 13 AUGUST. SOURCE STATES THAT THE LACK OF ACTION IS RESULTING IN A BREAK-DOWN OF MORALE AND A BREAKUP INTO FACTIONS WITH SOME FIGHTS AND SHOOTINGS.

D. SOURCE DID NOT OBSERVE ANY PLO TANKS OR ARTILLERY PIECES IN NABATIYAH ON 13 AUGUST. HE BELIEVES THAT THE HEAVY SYSTEMS HAVE BEEN MOVED FURTHER NORTH DUE TO PLO FEAR OF IDF ATTACK.

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E. SOURCE STATED THAT VEHICLES REPORTED TO BE ENTERING FROM ISRAEL AT NIGHT AND MOVING TO THE VICINITY OF AL KHIYAM (REF IIR) ARE SEVEN TO EIGHT M-113'S. NO REPEAT NO TANKS OR ARTILLERY PIECES ARE INCLUDED. ALTHOUGH VEHICLES APPEAR TO BE ENTERING FROM ISRAEL, THIS HAS NOT BEEN CONFIRMED. VEHICLES MOVE IN GOOD MARCH ORDER WITH EXCELLENT MARCH DISCIPLINE. COLUMN IS LED BY TWO JEEPS.

F. REPORTS THAT 175MM CANNON MOVED INTO SOUTH LEBANON IN THE MARJ UYUN AREA ARE DISCOUNTED BY SOURCE. HE SAID THAT ORIGINAL REPORT INDICATED THAT A FRENCH OBSERVER STATED "A TOWED 175MM" WAS SEEN. THERE ARE NO SUCH SYSTEMS AND, IF INDEED AN ARTILLERY PIECE WAS SEEN, IT WAS PROBABLY A TOWED 155MM.

G. SOURCE STATES THERE ARE ABOUT 150 ARMED PALESTINIAN FIGHTERS CURRENTLY IN THE UNIFIL AREA. THIS REPRESENTS A REDUCTION OVER PREVIOUSLY REPORTED NUMBERS. HE SAID THAT THERE HAS BEEN A WITHDRAWAL IN THE PAST FEW WEEKS AND THAT HE BELIEVES THOSE WITHDRAWN WERE EITHER "STAY BEHINDS" OR "CAUGHT BEHINDS" WHOM THE IDF DID NOT FIND DURING THEIR STAY IN THE AREA. HE PERSONALLY OBSERVED THE WITHDRAWAL OF TWENTY-ONE PLO FIGHTERS FROM THE NIGERIAN AREA.

2. A. COMMENT: A. IF SOURCE IS CORRECT CONCERNING THE PLO SUPPORT OF THE LEBANESE MOVE SOUTH AND THE APPARENT ABSENCE OF REJECTIONISTS IN THE NABATIYAH AREA, A SYRIAN ESCORTED MOVE THROUGH THAT ROUTE APPEARS MORE AND MORE MILITARILY FEASIBLE.

B. IF THE COLUMN WHICH HAS BEEN SEEN IN THE VICINITY OF AL KHIYAM IS ISRAELI, WE BELIEVE THE REASON FOR ENTRY IS TO REASSURE HADDAD THAT THE GOI WILL STAND BY HIM IF THE LEBANESE BATTALION ATTEMPTS TO FORCE ITS WAY THROUGH. BUT IN OUR JUDGMENT HADDAD HAS ENOUGH FIREPOWER TO STOP THE BATTALION WITHOUT ANY HELP.
LEWIS

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